

CLAIMS

1. A method of making a granola or snack-food product, comprising:

5       a. mixing ingredients for said granola or snack-food product with liquid binder to obtain a formable mixture, wherein the mixing is carried out at elevated temperature and the binder is liquid at elevated temperature and the binder sets when cooled to room temperature;

10      b. forming the mixture into product precursor, wherein the forming is carried out at elevated temperature and whilst the binder is still liquid; and

15      c. cooling the precursor to set the binder, thereby obtaining the snack-food product.

20      2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the binder is a sugar solution which is liquid at elevated temperature and which sets when cooled below about 40 degrees C.

25      3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the elevated temperature is at least about 60 degrees C.

4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the binder is a sugar solution having a solids content of at least about 94%.

25      5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the binder is a sugar solution having a solids content of up to about 99%.

30      6. The method of Claim 4, wherein the binder comprises at least one sugar selected from the group consisting of maltose, saccharose, galactose, fructose and glucose.

7. The method of Claim 1, comprising obtaining the binder by:-

5 dissolving a mixture of at least one sugar selected from the group consisting of maltose, saccharose, galactose, fructose and glucose in water to form an aqueous sugar solution; and

10 heating the aqueous sugar solution to evaporate water from the solution and concentrate the sugar or sugars therein;

15 where a binder is obtained which is liquid at elevated temperature and which sets when cooled to room temperature.

20 8. The method of Claim 1, wherein the ingredients for the product comprise at least one ingredient selected from the group consisting of nuts, fruit, dried fruit, cereals, and cereal products.

25 9. A method of making a granola or snack-food product, comprising:-

20 a. at a temperature of about 90 degrees C or higher, mixing ingredients for the granola or snack-food product with liquid binder to obtain a formable mixture, wherein the liquid binder is a sugar solution having a solids content of about 98% and is liquid at about 90 degrees C and sets when cooled to room temperature;

25 b. at about 90 degrees C or higher, whilst the binder is still liquid, forming the mixture into product precursor; and

30 c. cooling the precursor to set the binder, thereby obtaining the granola or snack-food product.

10. The method of Claim 9, comprising mixing the ingredients at a temperature of about 100 degrees C or higher.

5 11. The method of Claim 9, comprising forming product precursor at about 100 degrees C or higher.

12. A method of binding ingredients in a granola or snack-food product, comprising:-

10 obtaining, at elevated temperature, a liquid form of a binder;

combining ingredients for the product with the liquid form of the binder to obtain a mixture of ingredients plus binder;

15 moulding or otherwise forming the mixture or a portion of the mixture into one or more product precursors; and

allowing the binder to cool to a reduced temperature;

20 wherein the binder is in a liquid state at the elevated temperature and sets upon cooling to the reduced temperature into a solid state which is substantially dry and non-sticky to the touch.

13. The method of Claim 12, comprising obtaining the binder by:-

25 heating an aqueous solution of one or more sugars to reduce the water content of the solution and thereby obtain a binder which is liquid at temperatures above about 100°C and sets when cooled to temperatures below about 60°C.

30 14. The method of Claim 12 wherein the binder is liquid at temperatures above about 90°C and sets at temperatures below about 70°C.

15. The method of Claim 12 wherein the binder is a sugar solution with a solids content of about 98% by weight.
- 5      16. The method of Claim 12, comprising forming the mixture, at elevated temperature, into snack-food product precursors which are approximately the size and shape of the eventual cooled snack-food product.